

Sample Essay Topic

Inventions such as eyeglasses and the sewing machine have had important effects on our lives. Choose another invention that you think is important. Give specific reasons for your choice.

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(人文学部国際社会学科専任講師)

Essay Ratings

Each essay is assigned an essay rating by two independent readers. The average of the two ratings is reported on a raw score scale of 1 to 6. A rating between two points on the scale (5.5, 4.5, 3.5, 2.5, 1.5) can also be reported. If there is a discrepancy of more than one point, a third reader independently reads the essay. The essay rating comprises one half of the Structure/Writing score (1/6 of the total score); it is also reported separately on the score report, for informational purposes.

6. An essay at this level

- effectively addresses the writing task
- is well organized and well developed
- uses clearly appropriate details to support a thesis or illustrate ideas
- displays consistent facility in the use of language
- demonstrates syntactic variety and appropriate word choice, though it may have occasional errors

5. An essay at this level

- may address some parts of the task more effectively than others
- is generally well organized and developed
- uses details to support a thesis or illustrate an idea
- displays facility in the use of the language
- demonstrates some syntactic variety and range of vocabulary, though it will probably have occasional errors

4. An essay at this level

- addresses the writing topic adequately but may slight parts of the task
- is adequately organized and developed
- uses some details to support a thesis or illustrate an idea
- displays adequate but possibly inconsistent facility with syntax and usage
- may contain some errors that occasionally obscure meaning

3. An essay at this level may reveal one or more of the following weaknesses:

- inadequate organization or development
- inappropriate or insufficient details to support or illustrate generalizations
- a noticeably inappropriate choice of words or word forms
- an accumulation or errors in sentence structure and/or usage

2. An essay at this level is seriously flawed by one or more of the following weaknesses:

- serious disorganization or development
- little or no detail, or irrelevant specifics
- serious and frequent errors in sentence structure or usage
- serious problems with focus

1. An essay at this level

- may be incoherent
- may be undeveloped
- may contain severe and persistent writing errors

0. An essay will be rated 0 if it

- contains no response
- merely copies the topic
- is off topic, is written in a foreign language, or consists only of keystroke characters

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Structure
20 questions

This section is designed to measure your ability to recognize language that is appropriate for standard written English. There are two types of questions in this section.

In the first type of question, there are incomplete sentences. Beneath each sentence there are four words or phrases. You will click on the one word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

Example: Geysers have often been compared to volcanoes _____ they both emit hot liquids below the Earth's surface.

☐ due to
☐ because
☐ in spite of
☐ regardless

The second type of question has four underlined words or phrases. You will click on the one underlined word or phrase that must be changed for the sentence to be correct.

Example: Guppies are sometimes call rainbow fish because of the males' bright colors.

Now begin working on the Structure questions. When you are ready to continue, click on the Dismiss Directions icon.

When finished reading directions, click on the icon below.

Dismiss Directions

Help Back Next

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6 of 20

Questions 1 to 5 More Available

➡ But this was clearly not just a matter of the physical advantages of early humans, of erect posture and having the hands free to carry something else. ■ Fetching branches for a fire implies that the individuals concerned thought about what they were doing, and knew why they were doing it. ■ Keeping a fire going implies foresight and care. ■ Wood had to be gathered, and perhaps even stored during wet periods. ■ Such activities did not come naturally to early humans; they required learning and discipline. ■ Especially when humans began to collect fuel over larger distances, they devoted part of their energy to maintaining something outside themselves, something beyond their own immediate needs. ■ This is not to say they were acting "unselfishly." ■ Tending the fire was a form of "deferred gratification" or putting off the satisfaction of immediate needs in planning for future needs, like that which was later to become an essential ingredient in agriculture and livestock-raising. ■ Unlike superficially similar complex activities such as nest-building by birds, it was not genetically

The following sentence can be added to paragraph 2.

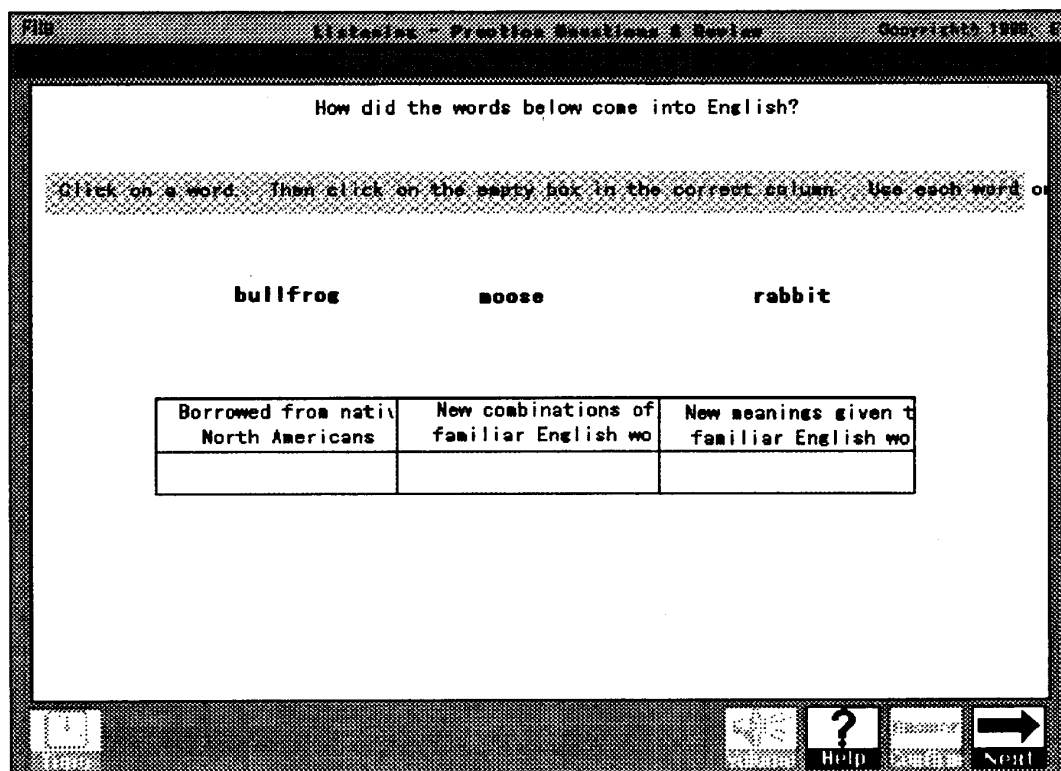
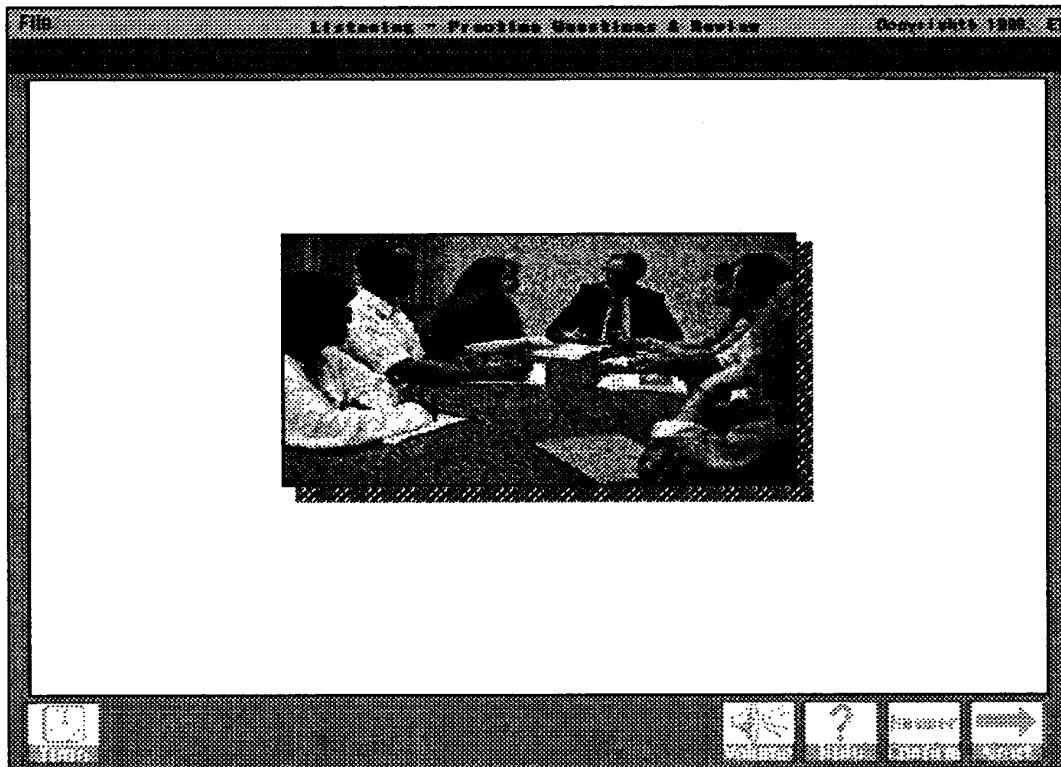
On the contrary, in caring for the fire they were also caring for themselves.

Where would it best fit in the paragraph?

Click on the square (■) to add the sentence to the paragraph.

Paragraph 2 is marked with an arrow (➡).


Help Prev Next



Appendix A

Listening Part A

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What does the man imply?

- ☐ The woman should not be out of breath.
- ☐ The weather could be worse.
- ☐ The bus must have been late.
- ☐ He is glad the woman's cold is not severe.

Navigation icons: Back, Help, Forward, Next

Listening Part B

File Listening - Practice Questions & Review Copyright 1998, ET

Linguistics

Changes in Vocabulary

Navigation icons: Back, Help, Forward, Next

Services.

Helping students prepare for the computer-based TOEFL® Test (1998). Princeton: Educational Testing Services.

Hudson, T. (1996). Assessing second language academic reading from a communicative competence perspective: relevance for TOEFL 2000. *TOEFL Monograph Series MS-4*. Princeton: Educational Testing Services.

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Giving students specific evaluation guidelines for written essays will help them to focus on content, development and organization rather than on the number of words required. From a communicative approach, understanding the writer's main idea and following its development in a logical progression generate higher ratings than grammatical accuracy alone. (See Appendix A for the CBT TOEFL® Test Essay Ratings guidelines.)

Conclusion

The research conducted for ETS that informed development of the CBT TOEFL® Test was extensive and well rounded. It touched on current theories in a vast array of topical areas related to testing and to language acquisition, processing, and production. I hope that educators will benefit from this review of key provisions and underlying theoretical foundations of the computerized language test when looking at current and future language education and testing practices.

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2000 project rests on the idea that “...all language processing is initiated in some way by the context (Chapelle, Grabe & Berns, 1997, p. 6). Here ETS researchers used Hymes’ (1971) conception of context that includes the features of setting, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms of interaction and interpretation, and genre, otherwise known by the mnemonic *SPEAKING*. Since a person in any situation must use language to communicate, “...sentences out of context are not typical of language use” (Chapelle, Grabe & Berns, 1997, p. 10) and should, therefore, be avoided in instruction and testing. Asking students to determine the meaning of a spoken or written text by decoding the definition of words and the syntax is contrary to how the mind processes language. It creates an unnatural situation for communication to occur and creates a disadvantage.

In testing reading ability among nonnative English speakers, “...it might be desirable to moderate or even avoid reading passages that focus on events in North American history or culture (e.g., American Revolutionary War)” (Hansen & Willut, 1998, p. 30). Materials that contain large amounts of unfamiliar knowledge about any different culture may create score variation among test takers. To avoid this possibility, it is better to use materials that draw on the cultural knowledge of the test takers. This point may be worth considering when designing entrance examinations, placement tests, and achievement tests. Teaching about a culture should be separate from assessing reading skills.

Students benefit from practicing prediction in reading and listening exercises. Because prediction occurs naturally in the communication process, students should try to anticipate what the speaker would think or say next before seeing answer choices or hearing answers. By practicing prediction, students will train their communicative response systems to operate more realistically thereby enhancing real-world communication ability.

Use of context-setting and content-based visuals simulate realistic listening situations that can aid learning and improve reliability in measuring listening comprehension. Visual clues help to distinguish among different speakers, identify status relationships, and replicate real communication more closely. In choosing materials for listening and/or speaking classes, teacher modeling, audio/visual and CD-ROM materials can enhance student learning and provide more accurate measures of student listening comprehension than listen-only materials.

Additionally, ETS recommends practice reading on computer screens with computer-assisted language learning software, reading material on the internet, reading electronic documents from the library and reading passages in the *TOEFL Sampler (Helping students prepare ...*, 1998, p. 8).

Also recommended is practice writing essays from a given topic within 30 minutes. Students should make quick outlines to organize their ideas before writing, use details and examples to support their ideas and opinions, use variety in word choice and sentence structure, and not take too much time pondering grammatical accuracy. A communicative perspective will be used in evaluating the essays which means that the raters are heavily concerned about understanding the point of the writing. Even if test takers don't have specific facts or examples to cite as support for their opinions, they should make up some evidence. The essay raters are not looking for correct answers, but rather good essay form and development of ideas. Essay raters will consider these aspects in their evaluations more heavily than perfect grammar and spelling. Of course if the grammar, sentence structure and spelling make the writing unintelligible, points will be deducted. Practice essay writing will greatly help prepare students for the writing test.

The publication *Helping Students Prepare For The Computer-Based TOEFL® Test* contains additional strategies for the Listening, Structure, and Reading sections of the test and is available for reproduction on-line at <http://www.toefl.org>.

Considerations For Language Education and Testing in Japanese Universities

Although the CBT TOEFL® Test evaluates English language competency in North American university settings, some of the conclusions gained from test development may be useful to language education and testing in Japanese universities. Research to determine the purpose of the test highlight two central tenets of test design, namely, "What is the intended use of the test?" and "What is the test intended to measure?" (Chapelle, Grabe, & Berns, 1997, p. 2). These two questions are basic, but crucial, to appropriate test design. Each year as educators prepare entrance examinations and in-class tests, it may be useful to apply these questions before modifying the content of the previous year's examination.

The model of language processing used by researchers and developers in the TOEFL

when taking the examination. Prospective test takers also benefit from using headphones while practicing since they will be using them in the actual test administration. Replicating features of the test environment will aid the affective aspects of test taking. ETS also suggests that students practice with retired paper test forms of the TOEFL® Test, since many of the question types are the same on both the paper and computer test versions.

General pointers for success on computerized tests such as the CBT TOEFL® Test include the following. Time management is key to good performance. In the case of the CBT TOEFL® Test, a clock on-screen indicates the time remaining for the section of the test in progress. Examinees should know the maximum time allotted and avoid spending excessive time on questions they don't know. Using the process of elimination to narrow the range of choices coupled with educated guessing within the time limit and moving to the next question is typically a better strategy than pondering excessively and having insufficient time for the remaining questions. Random guessing without reading the questions to complete a section before the time limit may lower scores. With computer-adaptive technology, the oft-given advice on paper tests to "choose answer *B* or *C* if you are simply guessing an answer because they occur more often as answer choices" becomes invalid. It is also very important for test takers to know that because of the computer-adaptive capabilities they will not receive many questions that are either too easy or too difficult. "They (test takers) can respond incorrectly to several questions and still receive a high score. The scores for the computer-adaptive sections are based on the difficulty level of the questions answered correctly as well as the number of questions answered" (*Helping students prepare ...*, 1998, p. 4).

ETS suggests other useful tips for potential computerized test takers. Do not intentionally or accidentally exit the test because re-entry is prohibited. Avoid using scratch paper for taking notes except during the essay writing portion of the test since it is not allowed during test administration. The skills of guessing, predicting, inferring, reading for the main idea, and reading passages of up to 350 words in length rather than sentence level reading will be useful in preparing for the test. Practice with CD-ROM materials where visuals appear on screen simultaneously with listening and reading. Not many students are familiar with this type of format because it is relatively new. Students need to train themselves not to focus excessively on the visuals and become distracted by them.

transmit scores to four schools or not. Test centers will now mail official score reports within 14 days of test completion. Additionally, practice test materials are available on disk from ETS and through the TOEFL® Test web site for free until February 28, 1999, and for US\$ 13 thereafter (*Helping students prepare* ..., 1998, p. 2).

Disadvantages of the CBT TOEFL® Test relate to test taking strategies and effects. On the computerized test, test takers can no longer skip questions and return later to answer them or revise answers once selected (except in the Reading section). Test takers will have to scroll to read the text in the Reading section, which might be unfamiliar to some examinees. A yet unknown effect is whether higher ability test takers will find answering only difficult ability level questions demoralizing and get lower scores as a result.

During research and design of the CBT TOEFL® Test, ETS made substantial efforts to address concerns about equity and bias in computer testing. ETS commissioned a study to determine if construct-irrelevant variance in measuring test takers' English language abilities occurred. Results of the study of more than 1,100 "*low-computer-familiar*" and "*high-computer-familiar*" examinees from 12 sites throughout the world revealed that "...there was no evidence of adverse effects on the computer-based TOEFL performance due to lack of prior computer experience" (Taylor, Jamieson, Eignor, & Kirsch, 1998, p. i). Although this research concludes that lack of computer familiarity should not disadvantage test takers, an ETS publication containing preparation suggestions recommends "...practice reading on a computer screen as much as possible" (*Helping students prepare* ..., 1998, p. 8).

Test-taking Preparation and Strategies

As with any language test, good language instruction and a solid language foundation are vital to good results. Of course, students should become familiar with the types of materials, questions, and directions contained in the computerized test they plan to take. Using the CBT TOEFL® Test as an example, students should read the *Information Bulletin*, use the *TOEFL Sampler* CD-ROM, and work through tutorials on a computer. All of these materials are available either on the World Wide Web at <http://www.toefl.org> or by calling an authorized TOEFL testing center. By becoming familiar with the new testing style and computer format, test takers will be better able to use their time wisely

Advantages and Disadvantages of the CBT TOEFL® Test

In reviewing the new computer-based test format and testing procedures, it is important to consider the advantages and disadvantages to test takers. According to information presented by ETS consultants at the CIEE Testing Seminar held in Tokyo on June 20, 1998, and at the internet address <http://www.toefl.org>, the benefits of the CBT TOEFL® Test outnumber the drawbacks.

Advantages in test administration are that test takers can register for the CBT TOEFL® Test year round rather than on pre-determined dates only. Telephone registration as well as rescheduling and cancellation is now possible. Test takers can pay for the test with a major credit card or payment voucher. Testing will occur at more than 300 individualized test centers throughout the world where the setting is comfortable and individualized compared to large, group, lecture halls. These testing centers include ETS field offices, Sylvan Technology Centers® and select universities (TOEFL testing on computer, 1998).

Disadvantages are that typically test centers are small and can accommodate only a limited number of examinees at one time. Given university admission schedules, there are certain high-demand times during the year. Because of limited space for testing, examinees may need to schedule test dates earlier than was required for the paper-based test administrations held in large group settings. Both the cost and the test taking time have increased. The cost is now US\$ 100, regardless of exchange rates. The test-taking time has increased by about an hour (4 to 4-1/2 hours); however, there is a break during the test. One concern is that in some cases test takers will have to travel further to sit for the test.

Advantages relating to the testing itself include the following. The CBT TOEFL® Test has fewer questions than the paper TOEFL® Test. Computer technology allows test takers control over the volume and the pace of the listening questions and provides context-setting and topic orientation visuals. Although Douglas (1998) considers it an advantage that test takers will interact more closely with the text and will write an essay on every test, I question whether test takers themselves will see these two features as advantages. However, examinees will be able to learn their scores on screen immediately after completing the test (except for the essay score) and can choose then whether to

scoring system will apply to both paper and computer test administrations. This change should prevent confusion in score interpretation by the receiving colleges and universities.

Figure 1 Types of Knowledge Tested

Knowledge Type	Computer Test	Paper Test
Vocabulary	X	X
Morphology	X	X
Phonology	X	X
Cohesion	X	
Rhetorical/conversational registers	X	
Imaginative functions	X	
Ideational functions	X	
Heuristic functions	X	
Dialects of English	X	
Registers	X	
Idiomatic expressions	X	
Cultural references	X	

Douglas (1998, p. 1)

Figure 2 Excerpt of Scaled Scores Concordance Table

Paper	Computer
677	300
650	280
600	250
550	213
500	173
450	133
400	97
350	63
310	40

(Douglas, 1998, p. 3)

tion is not computer adaptive therefore test takers can skip questions and return to previous questions. Text and questions appear on a split computer screen and test takers will use the mouse to scroll as they work on this section. As in the paper TOEFL® Test, test takers will read short passages on topics of an academic nature such as short talks, lectures, or instructions. Examinees should not need prior knowledge of the content area to answer questions correctly. Questions may include the following: identifying the main idea of a passage, inferences, the meaning of a word or phrase, pronoun referents, or information contained in the passage. Question types include multiple-choice style as well as new types where test takers click on a word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, map or diagram or choose where to insert a sentence in the passage. There are four or five passages of 250 to 350 words in length and each contain 10 to 14 questions. In total there are from 44 to 60 questions in the Reading section and it requires from 70 to 90 minutes to complete. (See Appendix A for a sample question.)

The purpose of the computer tutorial is to ensure that test takers know how to take the computerized test. It covers using a mouse, clicking, scrolling, selecting answer choices and the terminology used on the examination. Examinees will see the exact question type formats, screen configurations, and on-screen instructions as in the real test. They will be able to practice sample questions at their own pace, repeat practice sections, and use on-line help screens before beginning the test. The time used for completing the tutorial is separate from the test time allotment.

Concerning the knowledge base being tested, the paper TOEFL® Test primarily dealt with the grammatical knowledge of vocabulary, phonology, and morphology and syntax whereas the computerized test covers a much broader range of knowledge. The CBT TOEFL® Test includes textual knowledge, functional knowledge, and sociolinguistic knowledge (Douglas, 1998). Figure 1 presents a comparison of the types of knowledge tested.

The final and very noticeable change in the CBT TOEFL® Test is the point scale. The paper test maximum score was 677 points whereas it is 300 on the computerized test. Figure 2 provides excerpts from the concordance table developed by ETS (Douglas, 1998). Since the paper-based test will continue in Japan and numerous other countries in Asia for the next two to three years, it is important to note that after July 1998 the new

correspond with points in the talk. These images are much like visual aids that a professor might use during a lecture in class. At the conclusion of the talk, test takers both hear and see questions and answer choices on the screen. Each question has four possible answers. In some cases answer choices are sentences. In other cases, answer choices are drawings, diagrams, maps, or photographs. Test takers select one or two choices as directed on screen. (See Appendix A for sample questions.)

The Listening section of the CBT TOEFL® Test contains from 30 to 50 questions and requires from 40 to 60 minutes to complete. There are 11 to 17 dialogues containing one multiple-choice question each and two to three short conversations with two or three questions per conversation. There are four to six “sets” of academic discussion and mini-lectures. These are a maximum of 2.5 minutes long with three to six questions following each one. (*Helping students prepare for the computer-based TOEFL® Test*, 1998).

The Structure/Writing section measures test takers' competence in standard written English. There are 20 to 25 questions that require from 15 to 20 minutes to complete plus a 30-minute written essay. The CBT TOEFL® Test and the paper version contain the same two types of test items—multiple choice and error recognition questions. For the multiple choice questions test takers read a sentence and choose one of four possible words or phrases to complete the sentence. The error-recognition questions require test takers to identify the incorrect underlined word or phrase. On the CBT TOEFL® Test both types of questions appear randomly instead of being grouped into two separate sections.

The essay portion of the test specifies a topic. Test takers may choose to write the essay by hand or on the keyboard. This is the only section of the test where examinees can use paper to write or take notes. Within two weeks after completion of the test, two independent readers score each essay giving from 1 to 6 points. The average of the two rater's scores comprise one half of the Structure/Writing score. Elements considered in the scoring include organization, development, support of ideas, facility in the use of English, adequacy of addressing the topic, syntactic variety and word choice. (See Appendix A for a sample essay topic and essay rating criteria.)

The content of the Reading section of the CBT TOEFL® Test is similar to that of the paper TOEFL® Test; however, the format and some test item types are new. This sec-

ers' demonstrated levels of language ability. Initially, the computer selects a medium-ability level question. If the examinee answers the question correctly, the computer will automatically choose a more difficult question to follow. If the test taker answers the second question correctly, the process repeats up to the most difficult ability level; however, if the test taker answers incorrectly, the computer will adjust to an easier level question. Unlike the paper TOEFL® Test, test takers must answer the question on the screen before proceeding and they will not be able to go back to change answers once they have gone on to the next question.

The purpose of CAT is to create fairness for test takers. The computer allows all test takers the same amount of time per question, a fair distribution of question types and content, and does not deduct time used to read questions and instructions. When ETS wants to test new types of questions for future test administrations, test takers may answer a few additional questions, but these will not affect their time nor their scores. This process will aid ETS in updating the test instrument itself.

As a result of new research in assessing language proficiency and computer testing capabilities, the Listening section contains several new types of questions. As in the paper version, there are short dialogues, short talks, and longer talks or lectures; however, there are only two distinct subsections in the CBT TOEFL® Test instead of the previous three. Part A consists of short conversations between two people who are discussing topics related to university studies, campus life, or recreation. Each dialogue listening test item begins with a color photograph of two people shown on the computer screen. This photograph helps test takers identify the setting of the conversation. Simultaneously, test takers hear the conversation. Next, they both hear and read on the computer screen a question about the conversation. For most questions there is only one answer, but for some questions, there are two. Test takers select their answers by pointing at the selection box and clicking the mouse to mark their choices. (See Appendix A for sample questions.)

Part B contains longer talks, discussions, or short lectures. Visuals not only aid listeners in determining the setting, but also provide visual clues to technical language used in the talks. The short talk test items begin with the subject of the talk printed on the screen, for example, *Botany*, *Linguistics* or *Geology*. Next, photographs appear on screen to aid test takers in identifying the setting and to see maps, diagrams, pictures, etc., that

- testing preparation and test taking strategies
- considerations for language education and testing in Japanese universities.

Description of the CBT TOEFL® Test

ETS undertook a research project called TOEFL 2000 to explore how to bring their language testing into the 21st century. ETS commissioned experts in the fields of language teaching, testing, and measurement to produce papers and reports and considered the results along with other factors in developing the CBT TOEFL® Test.

A general aim of the CBT TOEFL® Test is that it measure language ability in academic settings from a communicative proficiency perspective (Chapelle, Grabe & Berns, 1997; Hudson, 1996). According to the TOEFL Committee of Examiners (COE), a group of language educators and testing experts who met to discuss and shape recommendations for TOEFL 2000, the work of numerous applied linguists and language specialists informed their definition of communicative language proficiency in academic contexts. Specialists who focused on the “interactive nature of language” had the most significant influence (Chapelle, Grabe & Berns, 1997, p. 2). The COE drew heavily on the *functional* approach rather than on approaches focusing on form such as Chomsky (1965). The COE also drew upon Hymes’ (1971) interpretation of *communicative competence* (Chapelle, Grabe & Berns, 1997, p. 2).

In the actual CBT TOEFL® Test development, ETS revised and added test sections, restructured test items according to current communicative language proficiency theory, reduced the number of test questions, and changed the point scale. The new CBT TOEFL® Test contains some components that are similar to the paper TOEFL® Test plus two new elements. Like the paper-based TOEFL® Test, the CBT TOEFL® Test contains Listening, Structure, and Reading sections. The Structure section now contains a mandatory writing component. The second new component is the computer familiarity activity, which all test takers must complete before beginning the actual test. All sections assess a broader spectrum of language knowledge than the paper version of the test.

The Listening and Structure sections now use computer-adaptive technology (CAT) and ask fewer questions. On the CBT TOEFL® Test there are no specific sets of questions. Instead, the CAT algorithm chooses test questions targeted at individual test tak-

Insights from the Computerized TOEFL® Test

Rebecca Tanaka

Introduction

In July 1998 one of the world's most widely used standardized tests of English language proficiency, the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL® Test) changed from a paper-based format to a computerized one. The computer-based (CBT) TOEFL® Test is now being administered in the United States, Canada, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Australia, and selected countries in Asia. Educational Testing Services (ETS) plans to begin computerized testing in Japan within the next two years (TOEFL testing on computer, 1998).

Introduction of the CBT TOEFL® Test was not simply computerization of the existing test, but an extensive re-evaluation of the needs of students, language acquisition theory, testing theory and test methodology. The CBT TOEFL® Test is not the only one to be computerized. Other tests to recently be computerized include the Graduate Records Examination (GRE®) and the Graduate Mathematical Aptitude Test (GMAT®). Another widely recognized English proficiency test, the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate IELTS, will be available in computer format at some point in the future, according to L.J. Guymer of IELTS (personal communication September 7, 1998).

Although the TOEFL® Test is a special purpose examination mainly geared toward determination of language competency in North American university settings, educators with other focuses may find the research and underlying theories employed in development of the computer-based tests useful. This article will review the following four areas:

- description of the CBT TOEFL® Test
- advantages and disadvantages of computer-based testing